

MEASURE



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The Need For Catholic Critics

Ernest Lukas

THE WORLD of today is indeed confronted with a hopelessly muddled group of agnostic, irreligious, realistic, modern, and transient ideas not only in the religious, political, and economic world, but also in the world of literary criticism. The latter fact is but a natural effect of the previously mentioned revolutionary and transient upheavals which not only throw aside all standards of the great ages, but also uproot the basic standard of literary criticism and thus lose sight of what literature actually is and what purpose it is to serve. As a result the followers of such ideas are groping in darkness anxiously grasping at whatever favorable doctrine may fall their way, and are whirling with the greatest of uncertainty in a state, most aptly termed by an editor of one of our leading Catholic periodicals, as chaotic. The end of much of our modern literature is in itself not conducive to the creation of a true piece of literature, from which fact it follows that the criticism and opinions of many of our modern critics, since they are based on these works, are not only erroneous, but also a most excellent display of chaotic and confused principles.

Among the many erroneous ideas of literary criticism which are prevalent today are these which I shall treat but briefly, yet endeavoring to illustrate the present muddled state in which we find the subject.

As is the case in almost every field of activity which results in the attainment of public renown, so in the field of literary criticism, we find the man who actually knows nothing about literary form, not to mention the one important end of literature, and yet acclaims himself a critic in the eyes of the world. At times he even seems to acquire this coveted renown for he does realize that he

must present some form of criticism if he intends to establish himself as a critic to the public. As a result he sets forth something rather strange and novel in the form of a treatise labeling it criticism and readily attracts the fickle minds of many of our writers who are guided by the sole idea of acclaiming any modernistic impulse which may surge forth from the pen of such a man. Thus, such a man actually falls short of the title, critic, for to give but one example of his course of action, he may in the presentation of his criticism base it upon works for the most part contemporary which may fall far below the level of literary worth. Speaking of a book he may boldly set it forth as a best seller, the book of the month, since it far outshines the ordinary supply of reading material, when in reality it cannot be held up even to the worst of Dante, Goethe, Cervantes, or Shakespeare. I do not, however, condemn comparative criticism but advocate it to a certain degree, yet things to be compared must have some semblance to each other.

Then there are others who perhaps are aware of the fact that literature is an art and as such it must be based upon some set norms or standards according to which it may be criticized. Yet these same individuals in setting down their standards fail to realize just what they themselves are actually driving at. A splendid example of this type of critic is the so-called critic of relativity who endlessly continues to harp upon the idea of relative criticism, yet pretends to deny the existence of an Omnipotent Being, the ultimate norm of beauty, in turn the ultimate end of all art, of literature. But how can such a man still claim that there does exist a relative standard when he denies the existence of an ultimate standard? No, such principles are erroneous, for relative criticism must admit the existence of an ultimate standard, commonly termed beauty in the field of fine art, or else it is not criticism.

Another false form of criticism which has been em-

ployed is that of personal taste or personal prejudice which sort of criticism ultimately defeats its own end for it is not true criticism, but only the expression of personal likes and dislikes. True criticism on the other hand is a complete departure from self, considering the true merit of a work in itself.

Yet must men continue to grope in darkness grasping at whatever favorable ideas that may fall their way? Are men to remain in this confused state of affairs acting the part of a war-crazed soldier, as Fr. Gillis says, who does not care in the least for peace, his native land or the warmth of his fireside but prefers to live in the midst of horrid bloodshed and death? Or should men dare to look at the matter with common sense and reasonable humility in an endeavor to attain truth and ultimate perfection?

There is one way out of this state of chaos, other men have found it, we have but to accept the invincible truth established by the past centuries, and we shall find the light of peace and righteousness. For is literature a transient object to be exploited by the fickle minds of men of every age, to be made even a part of their unstable characters? Indeed, literature is not a transient boy to be exploited with, but on the contrary it is a fine art and as such established upon the accepted standards of all of the past ages.

Though literary criticism must always be personal as is art itself, there is behind every personal view a set standard which is both deep rooted and durable. Thus has Elizabeth Drew treated of this theme, "— behind the vagaries of any one age is the stability of the reiterated values of all the ages."¹ While it is true that to a certain degree each age evaluates its works of art according to its own needs and its own outlook, there is always that standard based on tradition according to which alone a book can rightly be criticized. Again I quote Miss Drew,

1. Elizabeth Drew, "The Creed of the Critic." *Catholic World*, vol. 141, p. 486.

"No age is the law and the prophets. The men and women of today, whatever their peculiarities of outlook, are the descendants of many centuries of men and women very much like themselves and the literature of today is a living part of the literary traditions of centuries."²

Thus a man of our day though living in an agnostic, unbelieving, hypocritical, and irreligious era, though experiencing severe economic, political, and moral upheavals, and though faced with an extremely muddled state of affairs in the field of literary criticism, can firmly declare that he has a literary critique which is justly based upon the invulnerable doctrine of the eternal value of art.

Upon no stronger basis than that of the presentation of truth and the acceptance of tradition is a Catholic most inseparably united to the study and criticism of literature, for a Catholic not only expresses his belief in Divine Revelation, but likewise freely accepts the written and spoken work of others in respect to the various doctrines and articles of his religion. He does not, however, profess his faith by just a blind, thoughtless acceptance of these teachings, but by a thorough study of the invincible truths of his religion, and by so doing a Catholic can see more readily the truth and force of tradition and thus he is more prone to further bend his will in humility to accept the proved word of tradition in the field of literary criticism. Were the modern teaching of those who reject a standard drawn under any shape or form from tradition true, how could we know that such a man as Napoleon ever existed, that a certain sailor named Columbus discovered America, that a general named Washington was the first president of our country? No, such reasoning is most unsound. Imagine how far advanced in culture we would be if every man had to spend his life not in the study of, but in the discovery of true philosophy without having others to do this for him before his advent into this world. Men must

2. *Ibid.*

submit their minds to the truth and thus alone attain peace and freedom, or else perish in the mire of disillusionment and uncertainty.

Yet, before we proceed further, may I state that the first requisite of a critic is that he possess a thorough knowledge of fundamentals. I do not here intend to dwell at any length upon the idea of literature as an art, but I shall attempt to mention a few fundamental notions.

Throughout the history of the world, men have considered this creation, a treasure of beauty. Yet, if the majority of the common people were asked individually just what is beauty, I do not believe that their answers would be any too clearly expressed and understood. Yet, behind this hazy conception of beauty lies a definite perception of beauty in the minds of all men. Nor is this instrument of perception, the mind, something vague, for it is something real and true, guiding every one of our rational activities. Moreover art, the instrument which creates this end, beauty, is likewise an activity of the mind. Treating of the subject, Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* repeatedly stresses the idea of art as a rational quality. While Maritain writes thus on the same theme: "Art is before all intellectual and its activity consists in impressing an idea upon matter, therefore it resides in the mind of the artifex, or as they say, it is subject in the mind."³ Others also including St. Thomas and Kant have expressed similar ideas on this quality of art.

From this fact we must therefore conclude that art is not something vague but something definite, something real, an activity flowing from the intellect. Yet the intellectual activities are not limited to the one source termed the intellect, for they are likewise in limited degrees a product of the imagination and emotion.

Under this intellectual sphere may creep in an evil

3. Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1932, p. 9.

which I have mentioned earlier, namely, propaganda. Those who employ this subtle instrument are aware of the fact that open propaganda frequently defeats its own end. These same individuals have therefore employed various deceptive methods in the presentation of their propagandistic writings. John G. Brunini writes thus of this deceptive method, "This (the use of deception) is particularly true when the propaganda is devoted to a breakdown of the moral tone of a people and the dissemination of fallacious philosophies of life which, badly presented, would be incontinently rejected, but which, properly camouflaged, will be read and praised."⁴ In this field do we find another duty of the Catholic critic, that of discerning the hidden evils in the literature of our day and exposing them in the eyes of the world. Such writing can in no way claim any share in the title of literature for propaganda is directly opposed to any conception of the term beauty, the sole end of all art, the sole end of literature.

Thus seeing how great and varied a task lies before the critic, we may justly conclude that the first requisite of a true critic is that he possess a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of literary criticism. Let us, therefore, briefly discuss the virtues of a good critic.

In the first place when discerning the true merit of a work and its relation to the reading world a critic must completely overcome any bias of taste, creed, education, party, class, or nation, for if he does not do so his criticism is but another expression of arbitrary taste. Then only can a critic who has thus completely overcome his personal likes and dislikes, justly proceed to present a just criticism of any given work. In the course of his labors should a critic find an insignificant, worthless, or even more an immoral work, it is his duty to place it fearlessly in its proper category or else to completely hinder any conscientious reader from as much as soiling his hands with

4. John Gilland Brunini. "Where are our Critics?" *Commonweal*, vol. 27, p. 8.

it. Furthermore, a critic must always understand and rightly interpret the work at hand. Yet it so happens, that critics, as other men, are prone to fall into error. In such an event it is again of the highest importance for a critic, since it is he who for the greatest part prepares the minds of readers in their selection of literature, to bend his will and mind in all humility to the advice and due correction of others. Should a man thus equip himself for a so important position and have the one True Religion for invincible background, he cannot help but receive praise and be acclaimed as the pathfinder of righteousness, the guiding star of conscientious readers, and in all truth, life's best artistic companion.

But where are our Catholic critics who shall point out the paths of truth to us? Is it that Catholics should feel in some way or another less capable of attaining literary achievement than their fellow non-believers, that we find their number of literary critics so comparatively small?

The pursuit of true scholarship, as likewise does one of its important ends, namely, the art of literary criticism, demands rigorous training, mental discipline, and a firm foundation of knowledge and experience. The acquisition of these needs is the task which lies before those ambitious young Catholics who shall answer the call of not only safeguarding the shelves of the libraries of the world, but also of preserving and further perfecting the culture thus far attained by mankind.

Since the effect of literature on the human mind is inestimable, how grave indeed must be the responsibility of those men in particular who present reading matter directly from the press to the readers, namely the reviewers. John G. Brunini mentions the fact that there exists a certain class of readers who believe that they are quite right in saying that this or that certain book may be harmful to that certain neighbor, but that it will not have any effect

upon them. This is the very class which needs the greatest guidance upon the path of conscientious reading. To show to what a degree the rights of the Catholic reader are ignored I shall quote John G. Brunini who writes that, "a certain editor of a publication, pledged to treat of literature, admits that he knows of the existence of writers whom Catholics should not read, but asserts that even competent and penetrating criticism of these writers, — criticism which would warn the discerning reader from them — is better ignored than explored."⁵ Are the Catholic writers then to remain in the background when such abuses occur and when they further realize (as John G. Brunini likewise writes) that the success of a novel depends primarily on its critic who in turn guides the choice of publishers, and that these same critics are not only indifferent but even militant toward the high levels of morality upheld by the Catholic Church.

Thus we can readily see the crying need for competent reviewers, for true and just critics of literature, but to whom shall we turn? Shall we endeavor to further the cause of the few score of middle-aged scholars who are trying to do their utmost to further Catholic interests in the field of literature? Indeed we must do so. But is this enough?

Unless the Catholic youth in our colleges and universities realize what opportunities are at their disposal namely, true, zealous Catholics endeavoring to uncover only the best of literary material for the reading world at large, our very culture and civilization are at stake. This latter end is most inevitable should such a state of chaos and confusion as that in which we are so madly whirling, long continue.

Therefore, since we cannot deny the fact that the conception of the term, literary criticism, is not only vague, but actually confused in the minds of many of our modern

5. Ibid.

writers, the men who ultimately shape the culture and civilization of our nation, we must make an appeal to some source to lead us out of this state of chaos. But to whom shall we turn to guide us on the path of truth in the field of literature if not to the young Catholic scholars of America?

Agnus Dei

John Bannon

He passed this way for all is green where Winter's seal
was set;
And thickest Lamb's wool smooths the path that once was
rugged jet.
I can not find His Footstep, nor the place where He stops,
But hidden in the holly bush I see the ruby Drops.

Gershwin in Modern Music

Anthony Ley

CRITICS of today look upon modern music as a thing of no future, a thing which at some time will die out completely. As soon as something is syncopated it is placed aside. One important thing seems to have been forgotten, namely, that the negro spirituals and folk songs of our country once had an even more crude beginning; today we cherish them. Why shouldn't syncopation be given a better chance so that it can do even greater things? There is no doubt that modern music can have a bright future, yet critics seem to be crushing it. Certainly they enjoy innumerable moments of delight at a concert of modern music. However, upon leaving the hall it becomes circus music and clap-trap. Their criticism is destructive. They say nothing of the composer's good qualities, but do remind him of his faults. Here they could make suggestions which he might use to lead this type of music to a higher plane, but instead they turn to their piano which is cluttered with the works of Beethoven. In the background of this picture stand the admirers of the modern composer. Their words burst like bubbles and are gone. Hence, the composer stands alone.

In battling against such odds George Gershwin has taken more than he can handle. With the same kind of music he has striven to capture the light hearts of Broadway and the somber ear of the symphony hall. We can truly commend him for so daring an attempt. In the past it has been done only in a few cases, and even there the audience was of similar mind and education. For instance, a composer would compose symphonies and church music. It can easily be seen in this case that the audiences are of a serious state of mind and there is no need for a

vast difference in the fundamental quality of these two types of music. However, with Gershwin the problem was very much reversed. The tastes, mentalities, and emotions with which he dealt in gay shows were entirely different from those of the symphony audience. True, he did write different pieces for different audiences, but the medium, jazzy and swinging, was the same, even though the outward form differed. Consequently, the masters had an advantage over him. They gracefully enchanted one mind, while George pleased one mind and strained to please the other.

By thus grasping beyond his reach he left a bulwark open for attack. However, critics seldom rebuke him because of the audience medium. Instead, and rightly so, they criticise his larger works — those built on phrases of sixteen or thirty-two measures — because of the lack of unity and coherence.

To carry a thought through a large number of measures requires enormous intellectual powers which Gershwin seems not to have possessed. In the case of the great masters we may call it a gift of infused genius. However, George was not a genius in this sense of the word, nor was he a child prodigy. It is true that he started at a young age, but even though young he made himself what he was. In this process of making he did not acquire the depth, the vision, and order of climax which is so important to a symphonic composer. And still more he lacked the power to connect his themes. Coherent thought was not meant for and unknown to George, and it is on this point that great and lasting music is built. The fragments may be ever so beautiful; however, human beings lose interest in them if they do not follow through smoothly to a well-formed and logical conclusion. Perhaps one of the greatest causes of this lack of unity in the single phrase and of coherence in the entire work was the great number of themes or ideas which he introduced into a composition. In the course of a work, themes came to him almost auto-

matically. Apparently he in turn wrote them down as fast as they came to his mind. By so doing he has overcrowded his pieces; confused the central idea by introducing a second theme before the first was completely rounded out. This has broken the order of climax and robbed the works of a certain amount of trueness to life. With a loss of craftsmanship he also lost style. This explains how Gershwin in the whole composition lacked precisely those qualities which he possessed so fully and perfectly in parts of the whole and in his smaller works. The ill-disposed critics, even though they call his efforts a jumble of noises, do admit that in some theme or another he begins to say something, presents a melody picture, or shines forth as a genius.

In these phrases he not only has his own style but possesses that thing called: style. He has indubitable rhythmic talent, a brightness in his ability to write luscious melodies. It is almost impossible to listen to his strains of sweet melody, quaint rhythms, and orchestral effects without being impressed by the simplicity and originality of their composer's mind. Gleaming towers of glittering gold amid southern palm trees; glamorous ballrooms crowded with important people and gorgeous women; rosy banks of nymphs dancing amid bells and floating pink petals and almost immediately touching on paradise, all these appear before the listener's eye. Of all his larger works which contain such sparks of genius probably only the *Rhapsody in Blue* and the *American in Paris* will live. Even if these should be forgotten George will carry on.

For it is in the great number of songs that we will certainly remember Gershwin. They catch the ear of every listener like perfectly cut jems sparkling with varied phrases and expert craftsmanship. His harmony, consisting of simple chords well chosen, is smooth and effortless. He has filled them with smiling, lively rhythms; in which field he undoubtedly reigns supreme. Yet with all these things

at his command he never crossed the boundary of good taste. His melodies are molded with all his qualities so as to make a perfect whole. We will never forget the melodic lines of *Swanee*; the harmony and form of *The Man I Love*. All of us love to hear the high enjoyment and playful rhythms of that part of the *Rhapsody in Blue* which Paul Whiteman uses as his theme song.

Today many of his songs have been given the test of time, but still they live on, fresh, perpetual embers to light the days of the future. In his passing the song shops of America have lost a bright young star who had in his favor chances of doing great things. He shone already in his own day, and will shine also in the future. Almost immediately he evoked response from the hearts of his listeners. His music has that high attribute which causes people to draw towards it. In a brief span of life the glowing panorama of Broadway has been branded upon him and he in turn has molded this age in music. He has carried Tin Pan Alley up a rung on the ladder of music. The overwhelming majority of the populace who have gone with him only testify the stronger that it can be raised higher; for thousands are never entirely in the wrong. They with him are set on producing something which can be proudly called *our* own. His music is indeed American. In fact he is heralded as the first to produce American music, the "Lindbergh of American Music."

Against Misleading Reviews

Andrew G. Bourdow

IN the *Saturday Review of Literature* for October, 2, 1937, Mr. Elmer Davis, Rhodes Scholar, novelist, short story writer, brilliant critic, and all-round man of letters, contributed the leading article. It was entitled "Prophets at the Crossroads" and consisted of reviews of two books, by Hilaire Belloc and Gerald Heard. The books *, although both having as their subject "what's wrong with the world, and what are we going to do about it?" are otherwise as dissimilar as possible. Yet Mr. Davis treated them alike, and Belloc's book, most unfairly.

The Crisis of Civilization is a further treatment of Belloc's long-held conviction that Catholicism is the only cure for a very sick world. *The Third Morality*, as Mr. Davis admits, is nothing more than a hybrid, exotic, pretentious chaos. After admitting this, he blandly proceeds to give it more than three times the space devoted to the (as he also admits) scholarly, logical, and meaningful work of Belloc. Throughout the article both Belloc and Heard are subjected to distortion by the mock-serious tone of Davis' approach. Heard's thesis is, of course, alien to anything concerned with Catholic morality. It seems to embrace everything from vegetarianism, to deep-breathing and Yogi tenets. Such a work, of course, is a natural target for the biting wit and satiric attack of Mr. Davis. We have depended entirely upon him for our knowledge of Heard's book, and our appreciation of his wit is dampened by the realization that it was this very wit that led him so

* *The Crisis of Civilization*. By Hilaire Belloc. New York: Fordham University Press. 1937.
The Third Morality. By Gerald Heard. New York: William Morrow & Company. 1937.

of Christendom, in which he describes the early struggles of the Church to gain a decisive foothold throughout Europe, its gradual expansion, and most important, the integral part it played in the erection of what we term modern civilization. Scholars better able to judge than this reviewer will perhaps not agree entirely with some of Belloc's interpretations of specific events in the early centuries of the Church's growth. His eminent defense of the Faith, however, overbalances the value of unorthodoxy in minor details.

His second section is called Christendom Established, which he divides into the three sub-sections, The Siege of Christendom, The High Middle Ages, and The Decline of the Middle Ages.

Next he discusses The Reformation and Its Immediate Consequences. Then are discussed its Ultimate Consequences, under which he lists Growth of The Proletariat, and Capitalism, and Communism.

The last section, which Mr. Davis found particularly amusing, is called Restoration. In this section, and in the one on the Middle Ages, Belloc's admirers will find him at his best. For though there are many who disagree (and we are not one of them) with Belloc's interpretation of the Middle Ages, and his plea for a return to them, a plea which for so long was aided and abetted so gracefully by the late G. K. Chesterton, this latest expounding of its advantages and merits they will find to be the most convincing of all.

His program for the restoration of the Catholic spirit in all phases of life contains so much sound economic and social theory, as well as downright common sense, that we find it increasingly hard to understand why Mr. Davis chose to overlook them, and to devote himself instead to pointing out that Belloc can't know so very much about what is wrong with the world if he could write a book on the subject which omits any mention of Fascism. It seems fitting to point out here, that in the chapter on Communism Belloc says all that need be said about any of these present-

day manifestations of spiritual and moral decay, whether they be labeled Communism, Fascism, or Nazi-ism. Belloc may have omitted to mention the latter two by name because, as he points out, it is Communism, above all the 'isms', which is attractive to the greatest number of the downtrodden in the world today. It is the easiest path, the one which offers alluring promises of the quickest solution to the world's problems. And thus Belloc does not hesitate to say that the struggle is between Catholicism and Communism. It is this bold statement by Belloc which helps us to explain Mr. Davis' half-veiled allusions to what Catholics are doing in Spain in the name of religion, the alliance between Mussolini and the Vatican, and other sly aspersions. The cry of 'Fascism versus Communism' has been on many tongues of late, and this may have led Mr. Davis to assume that the cry may convey the same meaning as "Catholicism versus Communism". Mr. Belloc could offer him some valuable lessons in logic.

Belloc's specific proposals are clear enough. They were conspicuously ignored by Mr. Davis, but we shall not make the same omission. No matter what proposals are made for saving the world from Communism, unless they have as their basis three fundamental Catholic standards, Belloc believes, and pretty soundly proves, they are doomed to failure. And with that failure will come the downfall of our civilization. He calls them the three groups of reform and they are as follows:

1. the better distribution of property
2. the public control of monopolies
3. the re-establishment of those principles and that organization which underlay the conception of a guild.

That is all. The sincere opponents of Belloc will find most fault with his third group of reforms. A careful reading of his treatment of this reform may not convert them, but they will find it highly stimulating. His discussion of the

first two is equally timely and thorough. In short if you are looking for a competent survey of the Catholic attitude toward the things upon which hinge the future of civilization, Mr. Belloc can give it to you. And in addition you will receive a fresh exposition of his case for the Middle Ages, which he has always handled so well.

In Morte, Vita

Charles Gray

They fed Him to the Roman beasts of prey.
They crushed Him on the Anglo-Saxon stone.
He suffered; living, shed His Blood each day;
And raised a Tree to heaven while lying prone.
Why do they crucify Him yet today?
They might as well attempt to stop the earth
From turning in its orb, as try to stay
That Heart's eternal pulse. His single birth
Brought endless death to death. In future years
Will they regret their scorn and offer praise?
Will not this lesson ring within their ears:
"Destroy this Temple, and within three days
I'll build it up again?" Behold the death
That gives the mystic union livelier breath.

Some Modern Saint-Plays

N. Theodore Staudt

WE MOURN over the blossoms of May, because they are to wither; but we know withal, that May is one day to have its revenge on November by the revolution of that solemn circle which never stops — which teaches us in our height of hope, ever to be sober, in our depth of desolation, never to despair."

With these magnificent lines, John Cardinal Newman expressed by analogy his belief in a renewed activity in Catholic creativity. He is regarded as the founder of the literary revival in England and his influence on Catholic literature is immeasurable. An intellectual and artistic Catholic renaissance followed the works of Newman and today the Catholic Church stands resplendent in her glory as the result of achievement not only in the number of her fold, but in the amount and quality of her artists.

We, as Catholics, need not feel abashed when the subject of Catholic literature is mentioned, rather, should we feel duly proud of our men of letters, men who have not restricted themselves to a mere sentimental style, in which they infuse the teachings of our religion, but rather men who have imbued in their material a simplicity and truth of method which makes them unique when standing beside other writers. Nor have they confined their writings to mere treatment of theological subjects, but have climbed the heights into poetry, biography, history, fiction and drama.

Poetry has always served as a medium for expressing Catholic art. Whether we linger long over the work of a Francis Thompson, a Hopkins, or a Patmore, or whether we see hurriedly the works of Noyes, Sister Madeleva, Maynard, and Sargent, we must recognize the *fact*

of Catholic poetry. Belloc, Chesterton, William Thomas Walsh, Agnes Repplier, and others have hammered out a prose that takes its place with all the memories of the beautiful. Catholic fiction recently welcomed the arrival of Evelyn Waugh as it continues to value the work of Sigrid Undset, Sheila Kaye-Smith, and Compton Mackenzie. In every field, apparently, that Second Spring for which Newman prayed is coming to pass. But, as you have seen, in this rapid survey we have failed to mention Catholic drama. Something must be said for it.

Comparatively new is the *true* Catholic drama, but here, likewise, we have many noteworthy representatives. In general we might mention the works of George Kelly, Philip Barry (some), the contributions of Emmet Lavery, and those of Paul Claudel and Rudolph Steiner. The number of them is definitely modest, and the reason for this must be left entirely to speculation. Perhaps if we give some of our attention to the qualities of true Catholic drama, we shall arrive at a better understanding.

Upon investigation we find that there are some peculiarities inherent in the story of Catholic drama. There is, for example, the fact that at the present moment almost all of our leading Catholics in this field are Europeans. Where are the dramatists of distinction in this country? Perhaps the reason for this fact lies in this that the American theatre is purely commercial and it gives the majority of the public what the majority want. A Catholic American would not attempt to write a drama for which he hoped to get financial results — it would be a futile task.

Yet another reason may be that the Catholic audience have a distorted idea about a Catholic play. Their first impression is of something literally dripping with sentimentality placed against a very exemplary supernatural background. And this impression is quite general.

However, in this estimate we are wrong. There are, of course, many pious writings called plays, but these with

the help of the recent theatre movement are on the way out. A new interest is growing, a searching into the fine work lying in our hands, and to find this we must turn to the work of the Europeans mentioned above, the men who refuse to write for mere financial gain. Here are playwrights who write because they love their themes and who wish to make of them pieces of beauty.

These dramatists have succeeded in creating the true drama. It is interesting to note that as their material they have used the lives of the Saints, for the most part. However, contrary to any expectation of weak spirituality, these plays are noble contributions to the type, each filled to overflowing with beauty, each equipped with forceful and vivid conflicts.

The appeal, of course, of such material, hagiography, is easily understood. The martyrs, the monks, and the missionaries have always taken their places as heroes in the hearts of men. The material, therefore, is essentially appealing.

But, there are dangers in the presentation of such characters. Immediately holiness leads to the appropriateness of some lesson and then we are back in the rut from which we have been trying to escape. Further, there may be another evil in the making of these plays; with a life so inherently appealing, there may be the temptation to cut it into acts and scenes and to let it go at that. We know, on the other hand, that the author should and must contribute something of his own imaginative soul to the life, arrange it in some artistic fashion and weave into it true distinct character, men and women of his own interpretation and not merely individuals which he has called forth from the testaments.

On the other hand, there is all the material needed for the making of a good play when it concerns the life of a Saint. There is present the element of conflict, for the life of a holy one of God is essentially that. Struggle and

opposition are abundant, warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil. Too, characterizations are easily achieved for who could be more interesting than some of our saints?

In proof of the excellence of the dramatic content in our Catholic Revival, we have a group of well-nigh perfect examples of brilliant workmanship. Examination and analysis of them is a delight to the student of this form of literature. We can place our Catholic playwrights in the field of spiritual subjects in the same class with the others of our commendation.

We shall examine, first, the powerful and beautiful *Marriage of St. Francis* of Henri Gheon. This drama centers about the young nobleman, Francis Bernardone, who feels an insane desire for happiness. After a meeting with Lady Poverty, he is told by her to renounce the things of the world and to undertake work in God's vineyard. Attempting to rebuild God's Church he meets with much indignity from the people who believe him mad. With great courage and continuous prayer he labors for God, and establishes a band of Friars. But this is not the end. Francis has crucified his will to such an extent that he is in complete accord with His Maker. His love of God is so sincere that his sins torment him, he meditates on his wickedness and asks God to crucify him. His soul tastes perfect joy when he at last experiences the same crucifixion as our Savior. Such is a meagre and poor account of the beauty which Gheon places in this drama. Of the life of St. Francis he made something more elevating than a mere history. The words and movements of an actor tell us what he thinks the Saint really was.

In addition, the playgoer may see a distinct conflict in this drama. We see St. Francis seeking constantly to master his pride and to humble himself into complete submission to God's Will. At times he is opposed by his father and the people, who mock and sneer at his fanatical actions.

Throughout the entire production, there is that constant search for rest and freedom, a hope which we know is fulfilled only in Eternity.

Likewise, in *The Marvellous History of St. Bernard*, Gheon achieves great success, for he depicts the life of a great Saint with the mastery which few have accomplished. Bernard de Menthon is engaged to marry the beautiful Marguerite de Miolans. Bernard, however, desires to devote his services to God but his father favors the marriage — there is no escape. He prays to the saints, escapes from his room, and joins a brotherhood of monks. Having attained great piety, Bernard becomes a Prior in the order, later is reconciled to his parents and to Marguerite, who has entered a convent.

Conflict is here. St. Bernard must choose between marriage with Marguerite and a life for Christ. What is he to do? If he renounce the first, he follows his conscience, but he is at odds with his family and that of the girl; if he renounce the latter to enter marriage, he substitutes regard for a woman for the real and true love of God. His choice is the story of the play, material that makes the drama most appealing.

An English playwright, Violet Clifton, has given us *Sanctity*. In it we see the touch of a fine hand. Possessing an individual method, she has succeeded in creating one of the best of modern Catholic dramas. Her treatment of this saint's life is characterized by deep reverence and vivid faith joined by a delicate art. The effect on the audience is spiritual and profound. Briefly the play is this.

In shortest form it is the life of Elizabeth, Princess of Hungary, and her noble husband, Count Lewis. Thematically the play treats of Sanctity, or the love of God and of neighbor practiced with fidelity, self-sacrifice and unselfishness. Now St. Elizabeth, and her husband, performed in reality this love of God and of their neighbor, for they gave

all to the poor and sheltered the sick. But God exacted more of Elizabeth, taking away her husband, who died defending Jerusalem, striking her and her children with dire poverty and suffering. Yet still more did He ask: the complete and humble submission of her will to His. Only at the end can she say: "It is God you must thank. I am but as a water-reed through which can blow the harmony of God. Come and praise Him."

Until she comes to that union of wills there is earnest and serious conflict. There is a struggle with her enemies; how humanly she wishes to oppose her husband's being taken from her; even her confessor puts obstacles in her path. Everywhere is the warfare of a free will against that which is ordained for it. The opposition is even stronger when we remember that St. Elizabeth might, in the natural course of events, have hoped to do the things which she so holily planned. But, even her marriage had to be severed by death, and her almsgiving had to be pared. So much does love demand of the lover.

Another conflict, however, is presented in *Murder in the Cathedral*, the work of T. S. Eliot, by birth American, but by choice, apparently, English. The tale is the simple story of the murder of St. Thomas Becket while saying Mass in Canterbury Cathedral. There are the historical demands of the envoys of Henry II and there is the defense of the claims of the Church by the prelate. St. Thomas has returned to England to meet his murderers. And through it all there runs the song of the chorus of the women of Canterbury.

The dramatic conflict is powerful. Here we see the struggle in the heart of a loving shepherd between his love for those given to his care and the need for support of the cause of the Church, even to the point of martyrdom. In the light of this the fight with Henry is only secondary. We hear the pleadings of the humble peasants; we are one with the determined stand of the Archbishop; we live once

again a story that is now ages old. We come to peace only when we hear from the Saint's lips:

For, my Lord, I am now ready to die,
That His Church may have peace and liberty.
Do with me as you will, to hurt and shame;
But none of my people, in God's Name,
Whether layman or clerk, shall you touch.
This I forbid.

Here and above, we have seen the immense wealth of the modern Saint-play. These are but some of the entire group. Their dramatic and artistic value is incontestable. Indeed, the difficulty is not so much to see the inescapable worth of the creations before us, but to visualize for ourselves, some dream of the progress of this type of literature. Who holds the key to the future? Are our American Catholic dramatists to achieve their places with these? The field is replete with rich material; untold founts have not been touched; all waits for the hand of the true playwright. May we hope and follow our hope with the prayer that even now there are in preparation a splendid band of brilliant dramatists who will give us again and again the beauty that lies in so many yet unwritten Saint-plays!

Near the City of Rome, 1820

Richard Doyle

ALMOST eighteen centuries of history had limned their fading masterpieces upon the walls of time since a glinting star in the East led three Magi to an Infant King in Old Judea. The year was 1786; it was again the Feast of the Epiphany, but the peace of the "Little Christmas" remained unheralded in a world of unrest and agitation. The hour of revolution was at hand and the world was about to become entangled in the throes of another political and religious calamity.

Into this seething cauldron which lingered on the threshold of a great upheaval, a child was born at Rome on this commemorative feast and received in baptism the names of the Holy Kings; Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Of the three names he retained only the first and thus the world forever remembers him as Gaspar del Bufalo. Handicapped from birth by delicate health and an incurable eye malady, Gaspar was dedicated to St. Francis Xavier, and through his intercession at the prayers of pious parents, the child was miraculously cured of the latter infirmity. Thus from youth Gaspar cherished an extraordinary devotion to the great Apostle of India and established Francis as the patron of the community which he later founded.

The youth Gaspar was often characterized as a boy, more than ordinarily pure and prayerful, with a remarkable control over his innate irascibility and strong self-will. His vocation to the priesthood was nurtured from the age of twelve when he entered the Collegium Romanum and attained his foremost ambition in 1808 when ordained to the holy priesthood. The zeal and tireless energy which characterized his early work in the poorer districts of Rome

soon earned for him the title of "The Little Apostle of Rome."

In 1810 Gaspar received the first great test of his priesthood when military-mad Napoleon demanded an oath of allegiance from the foremost clergy of Rome. Gaspar, in strict accord with the decree of Pius VI, made his famed refusal, "Non posso, non debbo, non voglio." Unwaveringly he suffered banishment and imprisonment in the filthy dungeons of Imola and Rocca. After the fall of Napoleon, Gaspar returned to Rome with the intention of entering the now reestablished Jesuit Order, but in obeissance to his spiritual adviser, Albertini, he founded an order of secular priests to give missions and spread devotion to the Most Precious Blood. Ever a zealot for souls, Gaspar is reputed to have often preached five times daily, and on other occasions even more frequently. Though revered and idolized by thousands, he was not without enemies who sought to minimize his heroic work and augment imaginary evils. Foremost among his foes were the many officials of Rome who found their revenue of bribes on a rapid decline due to Gaspar's success in converting the "brigants" or hill-robbers of Rome. So great pressure was brought to bear that Gaspar was deprived for a time of his faculties, but though himself misjudged and his life work menaced by the very authority that should have supported him, he showed no signs of resentment; his humility was again triumphant. The furore soon faded and Gaspar resumed his work with renewed energy and eagerness. In 1836 his delicate health failed a willing heart and a year later in 1837 while administering to the plague stricken of Rome he succumbed — a glorious martyr of love for God and his fellowmen.

Perhaps no phase of Gaspar's missionary activity was more remarkable or more singularly beautiful than his work among the bandits of Rome. The banditti or forusciti of Italy were what the forest outlaws of England had been

in the days of Robin Hood. They were not the poorest or vilest of the inhabitants, but usually possessed small plots of agricultural land and a little hut whither they retired at certain seasons of the year. Taking to the field only when the hope of plunder allured them, they effectually escaped the pursuit of the law and remained secure among the wooded hills and crags. They lived under various chieftains, who while their reign lasted, were absolute but as they were freely chosen, they were freely deposed, or sometimes murdered, if they offended their subjects. To be admitted into the ranks of the regular banditti, a severe apprenticeship to all kinds of hardships was required. The address and energy displayed by these men, under a bitter government might have been conducive to the happiest effects. But here the fire burned not to warm, but to destroy.

The hills beyond Anticola, and the plain through which the Socco runs to join the Garigliano, was the country of the brigands. It was indeed a fit haunt for banditti; high mountains and deep valleys covered with thick woods rendered pursuit difficult and concealment easy. These retreats had from the earliest times sheltered lawless men; Spartacus for a time occupied them. The warrior thieves of the middle ages inhabited them; and thence it was that the famed robber Marco Sciarra descended to plunder rich travelers assembled at Mola di Gaeta. It was impossible for the roads by their natural position to be better adapted for banditti, or more terrible to travelers. They were bounded on both sides by steep cliffs covered with thick underbrush which reached to their very edge. The breadth of the roads was little more than sufficient for a carriage, so that it was not possible to perceive the danger which might be easily concealed in the thicket above. Thus the inhabitants of Rome were in a manner imprisoned by their fears, and dared hardly visit the Compagna, lest they should encounter a foe in every hollow, so marvelously did the

daring activity of the marauders seem to effect them. The brigands, emboldened by success, pressed closer round the hill-towns. None of the principal inhabitants ventured without the walls, and even the lower classes were robbed of their ornaments and little earnings. All laws, regulations, and threats proved ineffectual and thus depredations continued, except during the short periods of French military government.

A mixture of ferocity and superstition lent another terrifying aspect to the life of the Italian banditti. A corruption of religion to superstition was in evidence by the fact that every brigand wore a silver heart containing a picture of the Madonna and the Child suspended by a red ribbon from his neck and fastened with another of the same color to his left side. Their dress was otherwise picturesque yet military; that of some was a good deal tattered, but all had blue velveteen short jackets and breeches, linen shirts, drawers, and stockings; the latter bound round with leather thongs, which fastened on a kind of sandal; their shirts opened at the neck with collar turned back. The waistcoat was bound by an ammunition belt or padronica made of stout leather having slips for cartridges, and fastened in front with a silver or plated clasp. There was besides a *couteau de chasse*, the weapon with which most murders in this part of the country were committed. Savage and semi-barbaric in habits of life, they sought justification by maintaining that they lived such a life of a necessity rather than choice. If the government of Rome with the assistance of its dependent towns, and a body of 9,000 trained and disciplined soldiers, found it so difficult to subdue this lawless band, how much more must we admire the courage of Blessed Gaspar, who with heaven for a kingdom, and a handful of priests for his followers, waged spiritual war successfully against the whole of the inhabitants of these very mountains? Gigantic in spirit and virtue, a man of tireless activity, Gaspar was

astonishing in the effect he produced — an accomplishment which a government had despaired of and a nation had been forced to accept.

Over a century has now passed since the death of Blessed Gaspar, the Herald of the Precious Blood, who at his passing from the Eternal City into Eternity left behind him a different Rome, a changed Italy; and in the community of priests he founded an everlasting memorial of his name. On him the imperialistic outgrowth of the French Revolution under Napoleon Bonaparte, wreaked revenge as it did on his papal masters, Pius VI and Pius VII. As it failed in its efforts against pontiff and the Church, so it showed itself powerless against him. On him was placed the burden of overcoming banditry with spiritual weapons which in his hands proved surprisingly efficacious. To him was accorded the honor of being the first son of Rome to found a congregation of priests who would evangelize by means of the home missions. To him passed the great honor of being in word and deed the modern apostle of the Precious Blood.

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Editorials

ON AMERICAN DRAMA

Present appreciation of drama in our American literature text-books is notably thin. There are long treatises on the novel, evaluations of the fiction-works of Cooper, James, and others; poetry, likewise, has its share of space allotted to Emerson, Whitman, and all the others. But where, in these books of literature, do we find a separate section devoted specifically to our dramatists? We may discover some mention of drama distributed in a rather desultory fashion in some of the longer works but on the whole, drama is almost completely omitted, the one great exception being, of course, the treatment of Eugene O'Neill. The makers of such text-books have a rather mistaken notion about the subject.

There is an American drama. This is evident after considering the representatives of the art of drama in this country. The comic stuff of Royall Tyler, and the tragic of Bronson Howard and N. P. Willis, certainly give us material for discussion. Clyde Fitch brings the note of the social; Belasco does things for the American stage; all lead in crescendo to the latest figure of Eugene O'Neill, who is without doubt, one of the most powerful writers in our dramatic literature. Then, to all this we might add the individual charm in the works of Philip Barry, and the most interesting plays of Maxwell Anderson. The contribution of Anderson, alone, in the field of poetic drama merits full consideration. Yet, these are but a few of the many representatives in the history of American drama.

Furthermore, American drama has qualities, literary qualities, as fine as those of either the novel or poetry. It fills the important task of marking for us, as do the other

types, the historical phase of the growth of our literature. It presents to us specimens from the pens of creative workers which are just as interesting in themselves as those of other types of writing. Again, within the drama there are indicated all the great movements of our literature; there is the romanticism of Willis, the realism of Herne, and the expressionism of O'Neill. Finally, our drama presents a true picture of the American scene. Whether we choose the gaunt figure of Chris in O'Neill, or the blundering Jonathan in Tyler, we have something really and truly American. From the drama living on our stage today we can trace back relations and foundations in the American drama of the past. Anderson's Nathaniel has puritan roots as many characters before him; Anderson's Mio pleads for social justice with a cry that is old to our stage; Anderson's Washington is only the latest of a long line of historical figures who have walked our boards. We may quarrel about the present status of the theatre today; we cannot deny that it has lived in the past. American drama, representative, then, of the thing that we are, throbbing with the same blood that stirs our fiction and poetry, demands with just rights the attention that is its due.

N. Theodore Staudt

Book Reviews

Discovering Drama by Elizabeth Drew. New York; W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1937, 252 pp.

When I first heard the title of Elizabeth Drew's most recent book, *Discovering Drama* and surveyed its size, I was fully expectant of having the birth and gradual development of drama recalled to my mind in much the same manner as it was taught to me in grammar school, namely in a sort of prosaic, concise form. However, upon perusing the 252 pages of this book, my ungrounded notions, with very little persuasion, were soon dislodged. The author, besides presenting the historical background in a manner similar to a candy-coated pill, has likewise brought to the fore the art and craft of the dramatist, who also plays an important role in the drama, and what is more important, reveals the linked parallelism between drama and life.

The concise correspondence between "Drama and Life," which is so vividly disclosed by the author, appealed to me in particular because what the playwright expresses through his characters is "what springs freshly from his own soul, makes him what he is, his whole compass of mind and heart." He pours out to his audience that which he has concealed in his mind and heart, whether it be revenge, love, anguish or the like. Or again, in his own unique and paradoxical fashion, he may reveal some public or private abuse or error and thus by his ingenuity and skill, he upbraids and reproaches his fellowmen and makes them like it. This is even more true of modern drama than of Greek or Elizabethan drama, for the simple reason that drama of today has a "wider choice of theme because of the develop-

ment of frankness and tolerance," thus affording the modern dramatist greater conveniences of turning Life into Art. However, I think that *Discovering Drama* should have a universal appeal to anyone who wishes to receive as much benefit from a production as possible. As one turns over page after page one will all the more discover that drama is more than a convenient pastime. He will realize that it is the "creation and representation of life."

The logical sequence which the author follows and the choice of explicit words are certain to catch the attention of the reader. Undoubtedly, these are two chief assets in her achievement of expounding the life of the Greek, Elizabethan and Modern drama within seventy pages.

Although these three stages in the development of drama could have been more deeply explored, and perhaps would have added to the interest of the book, the author has succeeded very well in carrying out her primary purpose. She not only discovers drama for the reader, but she also aids in furthering one's appreciation of drama by unearthing the powers which create drama, by presenting to the reader an inside view on comedy and tragedy, and since words are the medium of drama, by offering a chapter on poetry, since the "highest achievements of drama have always been conceived and written in poetry."

This little volume, bound in blue, should find a prominent place on the Reference Shelf in any library, not for the purpose of gathering dust, but to be studied, as from cover to cover its value is equal to that of an encyclopedia of drama. Moreover, since during the present era the fever of the theatre and silver screen seems to control the pulse beats of many, it is fitting that the modern audience should desire to derive the maximum of appreciation, pleasure, and knowledge from the various presentations as possible. To those who hope to fulfill this desire Elizabeth Drew presents *Discovering Drama*.

Peter Brickner

Eight Decades; Essays and Episodes by Agnes Repplier.
Boston; Houghton Mifflin Co., 1937, 304 pp.

Agnes Repplier is now more than eighty years old, but in her most recent literary offering, *Eight Decades*, she completely disproves the notion that senility of necessity means lack of sagacity. In this, her latest work, we find accentuated the same qualities which have guaranteed the impregnability of her position among the foremost essayists of our country.

Her amazing store of knowledge, covering an infinite variety of subjects; her intellectual acuteness; her breadth of understanding, judgment, and tolerance; and her perspicuity and vigor of expression were never more in evidence than they are in *Eight Decades*.

In the title essay, Miss Repplier offers a short sketch of her own life; a bit of criticism of the works of some of her contemporaries, and an insight into their personalities; and a few crumbs of geography, political science, and philosophy. One would be inclined to think that in delving into such a diversity of subjects in an essay of less than fifty pages, the author could not do justice to any one of them. Any ordinary writer could not, but Miss Repplier can bring about a transition of seemingly unrelated thoughts in a surprisingly logical manner. Perhaps it is because of her uncanny ability in this regard that her works are so widely read and so greatly admired.

If *Eight Decades*, the essay, not the book, presents some idea of the wide range of subjects with which the author is acquainted, the whole collection of essays comprising the book will give an even better conception of Miss Repplier's encyclopaedic store of knowledge.

In the sixteen other essays, which go to make up the book, consideration is given to the works and life of Horace, the character of those early American settlers whom we called the Puritans, the smugness and hypocrisies of English writers of the Victorian age. An admission is made

of the imperfections of the city and city life, and the possibilities of the suburb supplanting the city are discussed. "The Perils of Immortality" is based on an incident in the social life of Charles Lamb. The importance of history and its value to men as "their avenue to understanding, their key to life," is stressed in another essay. "The Divineness of Discontent" is an onslaught against smugness and self-satisfaction. Really interesting information on the subject of mediaeval execution and executioners, some reasons for the popularity of Moore's *Lalla Rookh* and the effects of this popularity, grief, inspired by Lord Byron's poem, "Allegra," the meaning of moral support and its effects, are other subjects into which Miss Repplier delves. Still others are the distinction between cruelty and humor, and their relation to each other; the English aloofness and self-coveted alienation from other peoples, the timeliness and untimeliness of enthusiasm; borrowers, and their condescending attitude towards those to whom they are indebted; and finally, the qualities of cats.

Each of these essays, no two of which bear any appreciable relation to each other, is perfectly complete. There is none that wants for anything. Such extent of learning, as Miss Repplier reveals, is certainly almost unparalleled in the whole field of literature. Mary Ellen Chase asks regarding her: "Has she read all her life and forgotten nothing?" It would seem that in *Eight Decades* sufficient evidence has been advanced to support an affirmative answer to this question.

John Morrison

The Arts by Hendrik Willem Van Loon. New York; Simon and Schuster, 1937, 638 pp.

Here is a book which tells the story of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, and Music as well as the so-called Minor Arts, from the time of their earliest manifestations to their present production. Dr. Van Loon begins his pageant of art

with the crude products of the cave-man, and some six-hundred pages later concludes with the story of the beautiful waltzes of Johann Strauss, and the mighty operas of Richard Wagner. He shows the universality of art by means of the ancient Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Babylonians; he lingers on the splendid products of the people of the Golden Age of Pericles and Augustus; Byzantine and Romanesque he interprets as the products of an era of fear growing out of the preceding age of chaos; the romance of the beauty-loving Persians, the Gothic age, the Renaissance, Rembrandt's Holland, Beethoven's Vienna; each is depicted as the result of its time. All this in one volume amply interspersed with illustrations by the author (who is incidentally something of a musician and painter) and written in an atmosphere of genial friendship.

The discussion of the arts is done in a manner most unique, due perhaps, to the viewpoint. It was written for the very ordinary person, who every now and then catches the strains of a beautiful melody, or glimpses wonderingly at a piece by a Rembrandt or a Michelangelo and is thereupon affected with a certain curiosity to know the who, why and wherefore of such a creation. Such lofty figures as Giotto, da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Beethoven, are contrasted with the roving forms of the Troubadours and the Minnesingers. Notes of the lighter vein are introduced with the evolution of the violin, piano, orchestra, opera and harmony. Through all this runs a certain unifying note — the arts as the products of the men and times that produced them.

Although the work of Dr. Van Loon is one which can not fail to attract the interest of anyone who is inclined to the artistic, one does well to take some of his statements with the proverbial grain of salt. If he were just a little less prejudiced as a student of history, he would perhaps see that the Catholic Church was not the suppressor (vid. *The Arts* pp. 133-139) of creative genius but rather

its champion. It is admitted that the arts of the far East have come to a great degree of charm and through no influence of the Church. In the Western world, however, history tells a different tale. The Church did champion the arts especially through the black years of Vandalism four centuries after the time of Christ. It is to the protection of the Church that the arts owe whatever degree of perfection they have attained up to our age. Therefore, she is deserving to be credited and not belittled.

Perhaps it is due to this same prejudice (one cannot call it ignorance on the part of a man who is supposed to know something about the arts) that the author was prompted to overlook one of the greatest figures in the field of aesthetics. I refer to the "Angelic Doctor," St. Thomas Aquinas, whose references to art are appreciated by every aesthetician of any merit. On the other hand he devotes valuable pages to one who doubtlessly influenced art, but not for the better, since he had no love for the beautiful as Dr. Van Loon himself admits. Martin Luther may have made himself famous by his sensational revolt against the traditions of the Catholic Church, but as one to be commended for his influence on art he did little.

Aside from any grievances which the author may have had with the Church or any of its leaders, he does portray one fine notion of what good art is. You will find this opinion (it is not entirely new) in the early pages of the book, and with this in mind the universality of art becomes apparent as you proceed upon your journey through the arts.

To put it briefly, art is a form of vindication. Man, being a very helpless creature in comparison with the Almighty, is overcome with the beauties of God's creation. This admiration begets in him a desire to be a creator like to his Creator. The products, then, of this desire are what really constitute good art.

This notion is easily clarified by an example. Haydn

was a master when it came to expressing his feelings through sound. He begins part of his oratorio with the words: "The Heavens are telling..." In this work he expresses his admiration for all the glories of God's Creation, and it is quite possible that after his listeners approved of his hymn of praise, he said in his heart swelling with righteous pride, "You see, dear Lord, of course it was perhaps not quite like that afternoon when you allowed me to sense the glories of Your creation in a special manner, but that was my answer to You. I too am something of a creator. I can't of course do what You can do. That is only natural for You can do everything. But within my own feeble powers, — well, anyway, there it is, dear Lord, and I think it is pretty good." (vid. *The Arts*. pp. 4-7)

This is the only aesthetic theory expressed as such by Dr. Van Loon in his work. But it is a theory easily applied to any good piece of art, so that it is quite sufficient. It lends a note of unity to the whole book, making it well worth the while of anyone having any interest in the arts.

Joseph F. Scheuer

Sorrow Built A Bridge by Katherine Burton. New York; Longmans, Green and Co., 1937, 282 pp.

Since biography is as various as any other hard-worked branch of literature, a few broad generalities may serve to build a shelf for this one. We know of the dusty and detailed scientific biographies, valuable in the literature of knowledge; and of those which, lacking painstaking knowledge, make a breathless flourish towards art, and falling short of inspiration, lie in the gully of no literature at all. We know also of biographical essays that launch out at every conceivable tangent with such facility that the biographical element is only incidental. It is a pleasure to note, after making these three distinctions, that this book by Katherine Burton belongs to none of them, but possesses

something of the good of all. Its sober fidelity to truth makes it unnatural to doubt for any intrinsic reason, that the least detail of this really remarkable story is verified history. It is above all a story, told with a pleasing art, but there is also the inevitable viewpoint of the essayist.

One of its principal appeals to interest is the subject herself, for this is a daughter of the pride of our infant American literature, — a daughter of Hawthorne. The scene sustained through the latter part of the book is that of a modern New York institution for the relief of the victims of incurable cancer, conducted by a group of habited Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Dominic. The leader and organizer of this courageous group is the aged, but ever brilliant and active Mother Alphonsa, once Rose Hawthorne Lathrop. It seems incredible at times that this bright and Catholic soul is the daughter of Nathaniel Hawthorne, that man so sincere in all he thought and did, but so choked by the background of Puritan ancestry. Yet as this book leads her from her childhood in old New England to her life of heroic sacrifice in modern New York, it does not fail to point out, in essay and in incident, the influence of Hawthorne and his gentle wife that finally brought their youngest daughter to Catholicism. In fact it is the theme of this book that, as much as Hawthorne loved beauty, he loved humanity more, and that as much as he may have swerved at times from the mark of truth and real greatness, his spirit is living in this work of charity through his daughter who resembled and admired him so happily.

A criterion of historic truth and another means of interest is the copious quotation of letters written by Rose Hawthorne. A clearer mirror than these gifted letters would be hard to find to reflect the Catholic gaiety in which she so far outstripped her father.

The book is written in a style that is strikingly feminine, and as a woman's style, its predominant attribute

is sympathy. This sympathy is pervading enough to lend a certain excellence of form to the entire book. A predominating element in true art, which is responsible for unity, variety, and emphasis, but which in superior art leads these three analytic qualities back again to a grand and simple quality of goodness, is the repetition, at opportune places and in pungent variations, of the principal theme. So in this book it is but natural that there be a theme of filial admiration and emulation between such a father and daughter. With a touch that is pleasing and at times masterly the first part of the book leads up to a definite statement of Hawthorne's inspirational part in the character and future work of his daughter. Then, after his death, in times of overwhelming sorrow and great joy, of success and the crises of change, the idea is brought up again, sometimes encouraging, sometimes consoling, always with a development of what we have known before and with a recollection of the old things that have grown upon the consciousness of the reader like the theme of a great symphony. This intensive development is to my view one of the chief claims to artistic excellence that this book possesses. It is interesting and effective, if not always wrought in rounded perfection.

Another aspect of the feminine style is a weakness. In spite of a startling brilliance of phrase and the sensitive touch of every word, the style lacks the full and varied sweep of power that is almost indispensable in a book of this size. It is slow reading. Even after a hundred pages, when the reader has become accustomed to the peculiar order of thought and word, he is constrained to follow the unhurried flow of the lines. It is preserved from tediousness only by the vital interest of the subject.

It is true beyond a doubt that a reader's interest in a book varies with the interest he brings to it. It becomes particularly true in a biography of this kind, where the reader, if he is to enjoy its beauty, must be interested in

literature and in Hawthorne, in human personalities and their expression in the printed word, in the true Catholic spirit and the great and disinterested charity that arises from it.

William Kramer

The Liturgy of the Church by Dom Virgil Michel, O. S. B., Ph. D. New York; The Macmillan Company, 1937, 369 pp.

With a foreword telling that in *The Liturgy of the Church* there is contained nothing except what every priest and seminarian should know and what every Catholic layman has a right to know, since the liturgy of the Church is the rightful heritage of all the faithful, this enjoyable yet instructive treatise on the ceremonies of our religion is begun. A definition of the term is of primary importance and "liturgy" according to one authority, "is the exterior worship of the Church." Immediately a difficulty presents itself in as much as that is just what the non-Catholics (and many Catholics) consider the liturgy to be — exterior worship. Admirably, the author explains how "the liturgy is Christ-centric, centered in Christ in order to establish contact with God through Him as mediator," and how "liturgy is the essential means of God's reaching down to man, the essential means of man's reaching up to God." Contrary to popular belief, the liturgy includes not only the prayers and ceremonies which distinguish our various rites, but also attitudes and gestures, sensible signs or elements, and forms or formulas. Almost the first hundred pages of this well-written book are taken up by an explanation of the great influence liturgy has on our lives as active participators in the life of Christ and His Church.

Branching out from this treatise, the liturgy of the different periods of the ecclesiastical year is explained. There follows a superb commentary on the action from

which all the other liturgical aspects take their true meaning — the Sacrifice of the Mass. These pages alone would be sufficient to give the book an excellent rating. After this, the sacraments, the sacramentals, the divine office, and the liturgical chant are certain to command the close attention of anyone who is only slightly interested in the mystery and the beauty of the liturgy.

Without hesitation, I should recommend this work to everyone. The style is catching, and easy to understand. Those who rejoice in the liturgical revival now spreading to every stratum of Catholic life can only hope that a great many more books of the quality and high calibre of Dom Virgil's *The Liturgy of the Church* will find their way into our Catholic book shops and eventually into the hands of everyone who calls himself Catholic.

Lawrence Moriarty

A Lamp on the Plains by Paul Horgan. New York; Harper and Brothers, 1937, 373 pp.

"At night, so little life showed stirring because of the immense distances between habitations, that to see a lamp on the plains was very moving; while it shone there was proof of life; in memory and prospect, images of people awake, their days still busy so long after dark in so lonely a place; their minds at work."

Young Danny, who dropped from the freight train at Vrain, a small sun-baked town of New Mexico, was a lamp on the plains of life. His life was alone — his father gone, his mother stoned to death by a mob. Living in Vrain and at the McGraw's he was like a lamp in that he drew people to him. Some loved him, some pitied him, a few hated him — yet they were all drawn by something in his personality. His personal actions were comparable to a lamp. Buffeted about by temptations, by desires, at times fired with ambitions and love, his moods were as a flicker-

ing flame. At times he was driven by despair to try to run away, the goodness in him being almost blown out by some adverse force. Again he would strive to reach new heights of ideals by the thought of a person or the idea of some day becoming a figure in the world.

Danny had a sense of loyalty and courage. He proved it when he helped Professor Burlington, better known as "Dubya-Dubya", escape from the jail at Vrain. Later, when his dog took to killing sheep, it was he that fired the shot that killed her. It required more than ordinary courage to do that. He proved his loyalty the third time after Stevie was killed. Unable to persuade himself that he was not the cause of Stevie's being thrown from the horse, he tried to atone for it by offering himself to Hank, Kitty, and Wade McGraw as a humble servant willing to serve them faithfully. The flame of his lamp burned weakly before each of these happenings, but afterwards it burned more strongly than ever.

Probably the most interesting personality besides Danny is that of Professor W. Winston Burlington. Calling himself a former college professor, Burlington made himself known to the people of Vrain by giving an impromptu speech on Armistice Day, 1918. Rising to the occasion offered, he delivered a tribute to those both overseas and here in the United States who had carried on so valiantly in the Great War. Taken to the hearts of the people, he was affectionately termed "Dubya-Dubya." In his dealings with Danny he was gentle, yet firm, insisting that he go to school to study. Danny grew to look upon him as his ideal. When the people of Vrain found Burlington out to be a crook, Danny was one of the few who stood by him. The Professor had a two-sided nature. At times he could be a wise, understanding gentleman; other times he was a drunkard who lived for his vices.

Kitty also had much to do with the formation of the character of Danny. Both had the idea that some day

they would be married. As a consequence, Danny seemed to plan many of his actions around Kitty. Wade and Hank McGraw, both understanding creatures, helped Danny over many of the rough spots in his life. Stevie presented a picture of the spoiled youth, living for his own gains and forgetting others in his mad haste to forge to the top as a leader. Newt gives us a glimpse of the happy-go-lucky personality so evident among many cowhands and men of small western towns. Tracy Cannon as a drunkard was loud, vociferous and — always drunk.

The author sticks to his subject faithfully without deviation from the main theme. He shows that he has a true insight into a boy's character and the forces that go to mold it. His treatment is clear and concise without becoming too dry. It is a different story from the ordinary bulk that one encounters so often nowadays.

Thomas Anderson

Exchanges

With this issue of MEASURE, the Exchange Department endeavors to continue the work begun on the study of Catholic college literary journals. Although the task is not yet completed, we hope to add here something more concerning a general appreciation of the work done in this field. As was stated at the outset, we hope to discover some information concerning the present status of such journals, the trends of the moment, and something, too, in the direction of constructive criticism,

The cautions, placed carefully once, must be repeated. No absolute generalization is possible since the number of magazines has, by necessity, been restricted to thirty-five. Further, while conclusions are meant to be objective, sought for in a planned statistical fashion, yet the element of personal reaction must be remembered throughout. Finally the evidence here given presents only one-third or one-half of the entire ground to be covered.

With scope and aim clarified, the data of the study lie before us. We shall try to evaluate the external qualities of the magazines by reporting on the cover, its nature and worth, on the size, and on the typography wherever some item deserves special consideration. Then we shall look at the general content, stressing our interest in the type and quantity of the material; we follow this with notes on the divisions of interest, trying to see the nature of subject material and from this we hope to arrive at some knowledge of the editorial policy of the magazine. We begin immediately.

The covers of the magazines here included, were in the greater proportion of distinct artistic worth. A rational and calculated attractiveness was sought and that with special effort. Evidence was full that in almost every edi-

tor's office there do exist tangible ideals. Of the whole group, twenty-five centered their attention upon the production of a purely artistic cover. In most we found the originality of an artistic idea expressed well. In some cases the details were superfluous, causing the work to lack that sense of reserve which is so important to good taste. Of the entire group, eight resorted to the use of the College seal as the basic theme, nine others started with some other motif, nine more sought attractiveness by means of photography and the like, and the remaining number were for the most part plain. But many of these simpler covers made use of the device of indicating the leading articles contained in the magazine. The advantage, while it does not destroy artistic quality, is that it gives the work a definite scholarly appearance. Whether or not this turning to academic presentation is a trend in a new direction is, at this moment, very difficult to say. The advantages of each presentation may be debated. The admitted need, of course, is for the insistence upon excellence in any form.

The item which follows this is the discussion of size. With the magazines evenly divided in the choice of large and medium size pages, the conclusion is too difficult to establish. Further, the point seems at this moment unnecessary.

The same may be said, under the discussion of typography, for the choice of the size of type. However, several additions might be joined to this section of the study. There seems to be, for instance, a growing interest in the presentation of work in a scholarly manner, viz. with the addition of footnotes. This pertains, as one expects, to those more serious and lengthy studies in various fields. The practice, it seems to us, is highly deserving of greater imitation, for it will lead eventually to greater accuracy and, we hope, to deeper thought. Along with it, not because of it, may come a growth among our scholars. To this, one might add the presence in some journals of epi-

graphs and of editorial comment in the heading of articles. The use of these often produces a note of freshness and interest which is attractive to the reader.

The reading-content, however, is of deeper concern. A search into the type of material presented gives a rather clear indication of the interests of the publishers. Of all the magazines studied, twenty-four set forth articles of a serious nature; twenty-four, likewise, found place for short stories; thirty-one gave greater or lesser space to poetry. Further, in nineteen magazines we found book-reviews (which include the theatre and the arts), in five there were exchange departments, in six, biographical sketches indicated another interest, in six, there were printed one-act plays. Only three conducted something like a contributors' column; only three found any space for a sports department.

Now, from these statistics a number of generalities are very patent. They need not be stated. Other questions arise, however, which might profit by some discussion. The department of reviews is, for example, remarkably low, considering the importance of criticism in our Catholic colleges. Would it not be highly profitable to train our young writers in the matter of criticism, teaching them to be truthful, fearless, and accurate? The Exchange Department, however, stands in even worse plight. Quite naturally the rut of mutual admiration may have frightened many editors from the apparent pit, but here again there is the possibility of candid, constructive criticism — something profitable to our literary souls. Again, the situation for one-act plays cries for attention. If our Catholic drama is to grow, it must begin with the seedlings of youthful attempts. While experimentation must be governed, nevertheless there seems in general to be a distinct need for greater daring in our journals, particularly in the field of criticism.

Following upon the discussion of content, comes the

study of the division of interests. Our curiosity led us to look at the subject material in the light of evidence for departmental interest. Again, of all the magazines: twenty-two made particular efforts to achieve literary flavor; five presented studies in sociology (also well-written); two sought the deeper worlds of philosophy; seven offered treatises on some phase of one of the fine arts. Another seven made feature articles of the subject of Catholic Action; in one we read a scientific treatise, in another, one of history. An immediate general commentary is, quite evidently, that there must be more interest shown by the members of the other departments of our colleges. The literary endeavors are outstanding, but is there no need likewise for young men and women from the groups of our scientists, historians, and philosophers, who will set down for us in pleasing style their discoveries and thoughts in their fields of work. Perhaps if the faculties of our colleges will not look upon the journals as sheer literary activities, the hopes for Catholic scholarship will increase and blossom.

Finally with regard to the editorial policy of the group of publications, the same comment may be repeated. In the entire group, twenty-five looked upon their work as something definitely creative in the literary sense of the term; ten showed a greater stress upon pure studies with less emphasis upon the item of originality. The problem deserves serious and extended consideration.

In conclusion, we may state that it is our earnest hope to complete the study we have begun, in some early issue. If it helps only slightly in the improvement of our college publications, we shall be gratified.

Critical Notes

At this moment of writing, I can recall no Catholic exponents of a number of accepted literary forms. A field of untried creations in literature beckon to the ambitious writers of our Catholic colleges.

We read, admire, and praise the work of Mauriac and Sigrid Undset, of Waugh and Mackenzie, later we pray that some great Catholic novelist may shed his light upon America. Claudel and Eliot provide the stage with examples of Catholic beauty, and an earnest wish follows that more playwrights may captivate the world with truth and splendor. With good right and enthusiasm we strain our efforts to produce Catholic writers, but most pleas, as I can recall them, are for creators of great masterpieces. Might it not, however, be distinctly profitable for us to urge our youth to begin in a smaller way, and thus make a gradual ascent?

There is, for example, the novelette. A more intriguing form of fiction is hard to find. Further, the territory is still somewhat virgin and admits of untold possibilities. Fiction, of the very literary mold for which we are crying, awaits the hand of some youthful creator to fashion it. Again, the dramatic monologue offers to the aspiring author of plays many interesting problems in composition, pattern, and characterization. Here again the field is quite untrod while, on the other hand, the sources in Catholic history are beyond number. These suggestions are but a limited quantity; ventures (they must be brave ones) can be made in other types and forms; they await the hand of daring. In some manner, with all our strength and enthusiasm, with all our courage and confidence in God, we must in our Catholic colleges begin serious work in the creation of Catholic literature.

On page six of *The Catholic School Editor* for Jan-

uary, 1938, a young interviewer mentions a specific suggestion made by his subject, Sister Angela King of Mt. Mary College, Milwaukee. Sister suggested "as another means of cultivating interest in Catholic literature, that a clearing house of information about Catholic writers and Catholic writings could furnish interesting work for school groups. ."

Such a plea for the increase of interest in Catholic literature is valuable beyond doubt, but to this I should wish to add some amplification. At this time when the Catholic Revival is setting forth such splendid material, the need for cooperating interest cannot be stressed too much. It seems to me that we are so needlessly "galloping off in all directions," when some coordination would render the results much more telling. In brief, there would be a great profit to the cause of Catholic letters, if the proper departments of our Colleges were to band together for the purpose of planning their work, and most of all their ideals and goals. Unity of plan would inject into the blood-veins of the activity a spirit that would be unquenchable and an efficiency that would be immeasurable.

The young graduate student is soon made to learn the nature and the importance of scholarship. Through the channels of his professors and of books written on the subject he is obliged to realize that the purpose of all research is to extend the boundaries of knowledge. This form of academic activity has multiple reasons for existence, the chief being that work on this level will be of aid both in the further interpretation and in the creation of literature (I speak of a student in some literature.).

Now, any time spent in the pushing back of the horizon of knowledge is valuable; many toilsome years are not too many when the benefit of so fine an art as literature is concerned. But it is possible that the means may become the end. In our enthusiasm for expansive scholarship we may forget the purpose for which it is done. Thanks are due to the man who enables us to know more of some item;

more thanks are due to him who discovers this knowledge and thereafter helps us make use of it. Briefly, scholarship has advanced to the exclusion of creativity.

The solution, I think, lies within the domain of our colleges. In them we should find the greatest application of the discoveries of the leaders in research. However, I do not think that it is the duty of the professor to correlate the two fields entirely. Particularly appealing is the idea that the graduating student may, with great profit to himself and others, take up just that kind of work. He would not be forcing himself into provinces which are not his; he would not be trying more than he is able; the professor, on the other hand, might be given some invaluable aid. I suggest, therefore that students in literature take up the work of interpreting the findings of scholars to the benefit of themselves and the world in general.

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